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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1259
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001009

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: RIZEIGAT ARAB LEADER ON DARFUR CIVIL SOCIETY, OBSTREPEROUS
SOUTH DARFUR GOVERNOR

REF: KHARTOUM 992

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Poloff met July 6 with Waleed Maddibo Mousa, prominent Darfur Rizeigat Arab and civil society leader and organizer of the annual equestrian festival in Ed-Daien, South Darfur. Maddibo used the festival to create a "clandestine dialogue" among Darfuris, and believes the late-night discussions among Rizeigat Arabs gave them a chance to voice grievances free of GOS interference. He heaped scorn on the Wali (Governor) of South Darfur, a well-known obstructionist of international efforts in the region, and plans further festivals in more friendly areas of Darfur. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Maddibo, a sophisticated Sudanese-American with a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Florida, and son of the Nazir of the South Darfur Abbala Rizeigat community, described the annual festival as "another success in challenging the institutional mentality of an apathetic population." The event, held in May in El-Daien, attracted tens of thousands of local Arabs, and attracted positive press in major media outlets such as Al-Jazeera, BBC and the Washington Post. However Maddibo was more focused on the after-effects of calming down the tense situation in Ed-Daien, noting that the festival had been blocked from even occurring for several months by the difficult and obstructive Wali of South Darfur. Maddibo said that El-Daien boasts a large Dinka population, and Maddibo estimates that 90 percent of urban dwellers there are non-Arab, but its ethnic heterogeneity may prove a source of instability. "If you don't take protective measures, you are potentially creating a new Abyei. The Rizeigat tribal institution doesn't understand way to take advantage of any peace initiative. This may be the way out." (Note: El-Daien is the site of the infamous slaughter of Dinka IDPs by these same Rizeigat Arabs in the early 1990s, who were then allied more closely with the Khartoum regime and used in numerous attacks against the South. End note.)

¶2. (SBU) "This gathering was not apolitical," Maddibo said, describing the event as an "umbrella" under which Rizeigat Arabs attended horse festivals during the day, and provided cover for independent discussions on political topics at night. "We must do reconciliation among the tribes clandestinely. The government would interrupt it, and Darfur civil society forums are deprived of resources." The five day festival ended without any instances of political violence or interruption by Sudanese security forces. "Not a single mobile phone was stolen!" Maddibo claimed, and also cited an internal GOS security report that he claimed gave the event credit for improving local security.

¶3. (SBU) Maddibo did not hide his contempt for Ali Mahmoud, Wali of South Darfur. Mahmoud, who in a recent newspaper interview expressed his desire to expel all aid workers from Sudan, threw up numerous administrative roadblocks to halt the festival, delaying the festival by three months. "The emperor of South Darfur," as Maddibo described him, is "the match South Darfur needs to set it in flames. He is arrogant. He despises the tribal chiefs, he disrespects his

own commissioners, he intimidates civil society, and he has no voice with the rebels." Maddibo said he had received information that Mahmoud had ordered retaliatory SAF air attacks in June on the Beni Halba Arabs (ref. A, paragraph 9), killing 109 members of the Beni Halba militia. Maddibo said that after months of bureaucratic delays, he finally managed to outmaneuver the wily Wali thanks to his personal contacts in the GOS, who in turn have begun to turn against their appointee. "He has become a liability for the NCP," Maddibo said, "and they don't trust him." The Beni Halba have reportedly sworn to kill the Wali (who comes from the Darfuri Taisha Arab tribe) as part of a blood feud.

¶4. (SBU) At heart an academic, Maddibo's said his goal is to empower "agents capable of acting civically," but remains concerned that international efforts to solve the Darfur crisis strand themselves in hotels in Khartoum without actually reaching out to target beneficiaries. "People in Darfur don't know anything about the DDDC, the JMST and UNAMID," voicing a common complaint heard from Darfuri civil society activists. Hence his ambitious plans: Maddibo intends to move forward with proposals for another festival in El Geneina, West Darfur ("This time the Wali, he wants us there"), and a series of engagements to expose his "clandestine dialogue" to as many Darfuris as possible. "Both rebels and the GOS are taking the silent majority for granted. If the silent majority can coerce them, and if they feel the silent majority can pull the rug out from under their feet, then they have to respond."

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Maddibo is well connected within his tribe and broader Sudanese society, and his goals most likely connect to far-reaching political ambitions. The festival received significant support from international donors, and it appears to have paid off in South Darfur. Ed-Daien sits on the fault line that connects

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Darfur with South Kordofan and the always volatile Abyei, and peaceful civil society initiatives such as this serve to encourage discussion among tribal groups that have been at times ignored and at times manipulated by Khartoum.

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